The Artist and the Cat - Chapter 8

The next morning, the artist was still sleeping in his bed. When he finally woke up, the first thing he saw was a familiar pair of emerald-green eyes staring at him. Rita, his lovely feline companion, had been sleeping on his chest the whole night under the blanket.

Rita: "Good morning, honey. Did you sleep well?"

Artist: "Yawn... Morning, sweetheart. I slept pretty good. Were you sleeping on my chest the whole night?"

Rita: "Not at first. I was sleeping next to you and thought it would be a nice surprise that you awoke to the sight of your new girlfriend. I told you that you'd be well rewarded in bed..."

Artist: "It was quite a nice surprise indeed. You have the most beautiful pair of eyes..."

Rita: "Now that I think about it, you also have green eyes. Another thing we share in common..."

Artist: "Today is Sunday, my dear Rita. Which means I go back to work tomorrow..."

Rita: "Oh... I wish I could spend every hour of the day with you, but I know that you have to work to keep up with paying for things like the house and the things that Runt and I need."

Artist: "Yeah... Let's go get breakfast ready."

Rita: "Wait... Just a bit longer. I love these quiet intimate moments together..."

Artist: "All right. Just a bit longer..."

Rita hugged the artist and gave him a kiss on the lips. The two spent a few more minutes together in bed and then they started to get out to start the day.

Artist: "I wonder how Runt is doing. He slept on the couch all night."

The artist changed clothes while Rita watched. Then the pair went to the living room and saw that Runt was still sleeping. The silver-haired beauty went to Runt's side and gently rubbed his back with her paws.

Rita: "Runt... It's time to get up. We're going to have breakfast soon..."

The sleepy dog's eyes started to open to the sound of his best friend's voice. He then stretched his legs and greeted Rita with a hug.

Runt: "Morning, Rita. I was tired. Definitely, definitely tired..."

Rita: "You spent most of the night watching some strange cartoon on the television or something. What was that?"

Runt: "Ooh... It's called 'The Glitch'. It's about some grouchy green guy that lives in the mountains and always tries to play pranks on the people in the village nearby. He also has a dog that is fat. Definitely, definitely fat..."

Rita: "Heh. Sounds like a real hoot. Maybe I should check it out sometime... Did you sleep well? You were so tired that you didn't even get to rest in your new bed."

Runt: "Yeah. I slept good. No bad nightmares about that evil duck or anything like that."

Rita: "Sigh... I'll never understand what that duck business is all about..."

While Rita was still trying to figure out Runt's odd nightmares, the artist was preparing food for his new companions. He opened the bags of dry food for both Rita and Runt and poured some into their new food bowls. He also got some cold filtered water from a pitcher in the refrigerator and poured it into their new water bowls.

Artist: "All right, guys. Breakfast is ready!"

Runt: "Oh, boy! Food!"

Runt quickly jumped off the couch and the blanket that was covering him flew off and landed on Rita's face. She was stunned for a few seconds, but she quickly got it off and regained her composure. She then joined her excited friend in the kitchen where they saw the recently prepared meals.

Rita: "This stuff looks all right. I wonder how it tastes..."

As the two started eating the dry pet food, they were both stunned with how good it tasted. It had been ages since the two had enjoyed fresh pet food since they were roaming the streets and alleys of the world.

Runt: "This is great! Definitely, definitely great!"

Rita: "Wow... It's not half bad. In fact... It's amazing! You should try it, honey."

Artist: "Nah... I'm good. I'm making some sausage and bacon for myself. I could even give the two of you some if you like."

Rita: "We'd love that. Right, Runt?"

Runt: "Yeah! I love bacon!"

After the sausage and bacon were finally ready, the artist waited until the food cooled off a bit before serving some to Rita and Runt. Then Rita noticed her owner

getting his shoes on.

Rita: "Hmm? Where are you going?"

Artist: "I usually go to church on Sundays around this time."

Rita: "Wait... Are you leaving already? You'll be going to work tomorrow. We should spend the whole day together..."

The artist thought long and hard. He wanted to go to church, but didn't want to leave his companions alone. Then he remembered something that would solve the issue altogether.

Artist: "I've got a solution. I know that I can't take the two of you there, but we still can watch the service on the television together."

The artist goes to the living room and turns on the television with the remote. As he was changing channels, he found one that was about to broadcast a Sunday mass. He sat down on the couch and his new friends joined him as well. Rita sat at his right side holding on to him with her front paws and Runt sat at his left side leaning against him. As the service played on, the artist watched while Runt eventually dozed off for a bit and Rita just kept holding on to him while purring. After nearly an hour, the televised mass was over and the artist was petting his two companions until they eventually woke up.

Rita: "Ahh... That's more like it. I told you that I loved these intimate moments with you. We should do this every Sunday morning from now on."

Artist: "Yeah. Now that I have the two of you to take care of, this is a pretty good way to spend Sunday mornings."

Runt: "That was nice. Definitely, definitely nice..."

Rita: "Oh! I just remembered something! You needed to make a painting for that cashier from the pet supply store."

Artist: "Oh, that's right! Okay, Rita and Runt. It's off to the studio!"

The artist leads Rita and Runt into the studio. Once inside, he turns on the light and gets his drawing easel prepared while the two look on in amazement.

Rita: "So... What do we do now? Do we have to do a pose or something?"

Artist: "First, I'd like to warm up by making a few sketches of the both of you. It gets me prepared for the big painting later. It'll be the first time I've worked with something other than plants or inanimate objects."

Rita: "Oh. All right. Guess the two of us will sit together or something like that."

Artist: "That's the idea. The both of you can pose in a comfortable position while I make the first sketches. I wouldn't want you to feel uncomfortable having to pose for a long time in an awkward position or something like that..."

Runt: "Okay! How's this then?"

Runt was sitting on all fours with Rita leaning on his back while admiring her beloved artist as he prepared his drawing pencils.

Rita: "I'm ready for my close-up, Mr. Artist..."

Artist: "That's a perfect pose, you two! Let me begin the drawing now."

The artist began drawing his new friends with a pencil. It only took a few moments for the initial sketch to be completed. He then picked up the paper he was drawing on and showed it to Rita and Runt who were really impressed.

Rita: "Oh, my... I look amazing!"

Runt: "Wow... That's good. Definitely, definitely good."

Artist: "If you'd like, I could make at least one more before starting on the actual painting."

Rita: "Sure, honey. I don't mind... Here, Runt. Follow my lead."

Rita instructed Runt to lay down on the ground with his arms and legs stretched out while she sat on his back while holding up her right paw and having one eye closed.

Artist: "That one's adorable. Let me try drawing that pose now."

The artist took a few minutes longer on the second sketch as he wanted to get it just right. Once finished, he showed it to his companions.

Rita: "You really are quite talented, sweetie. I look so cute there..."

Runt: "Yeah, Rita. You definitely, definitely are a cute dog..."

Rita: "Woof..."

Artist: "All right. I think I'm ready for the big time. Go ahead and pose for the painting now."

Runt: "I know just the pose!"

Runt puts his arm around Rita in a warm embrace. Rita, following his cue, wraps her arm around him as well. The sight made the artist really happy but sad at the same time as he remembered the fact that they were homeless for what may have been many years.

Artist: "That's perfect! Hold that pose as long as you two can."

The artist got straight to work drawing Rita and Runt as they kept the pose for as long as possible. After several grueling minutes, he was finished with the initial sketch.

Artist: "Whew... Here it is. What do you two think?"

Rita: "Oh, my... It's beautiful..."

Runt: "Breathtaking... Definitely..."

Artist: "I'm glad that you love it. Now to get the paints..."

The artist took out his collection of acrylic paints and started using a palette to mix certain colors to match those of Rita and Runt's fur. The process took over half and hour as he started to finally paint the piece. Runt took a quick nap while Rita decided to climb onto the artist's shoulder to watch the magic happening on the page. Her emerald-green eyes shone as she watched the painting eventually bear a nearly accurate likeness to the real thing.

Rita: "You're really gifted, honey..."

Artist: "Thank you, Rita. It really means a lot hearing it from you."

Rita: "Maybe sometime this week the two of us could have a private drawing session together. I could even make a few poses that would really expand your horizons, if you catch my drift..."

Artist: "That sounds amazing... It's a date then."

Rita: "Ooh... It's nearly finished... That cashier is gonna love this painting!"

Artist: "Yeah, I hope so..."

The artist was preparing the finishing touches for the piece and then signed his name on the bottom of the page. He then allowed the completed painting to dry and with Rita still on his shoulder decided to wake up Runt.

Runt: "Huh? Oh... Is it done yet?"

Rita: "Yeah. See for yourself, Runt. But don't knock it down or something like that..."

Runt took a look at the finished artwork and had a big smile on his face. He loved how accurate the painting was to the real thing and gave the artist a big hug.

Rita: "Whoa... I'm still up here, remember? Don't make me fall off now..."

Runt: "Oh... Sorry, Rita. I nearly forgot..."

Rita: "Dogs... Go fig... Hey! What's that green thing over there?"

Rita noticed a slim object on a nearby table with a black cord attached to it. She pointed the artist to it and he went over to pick it up.

Artist: "This is a miniature camera. I use it to take pictures of things to use in my artworks. It allows you to take up to twenty-four exposures and then you take it to a store to have them developed into photos in about an hour or less. This is the button to take the picture and this device lets you scroll to the next available exposure. Looks like there's three left..."

Rita: "Maybe you can use the last three to take pictures of us together."

Artist: "Only one problem with that. There isn't anyone to take a picture of the three of us together. We'll have to take three separate pictures..."

Rita: "I guess that means each of us will have to operate the camera as the pictures are taken."

Artist: "I'll set the camera on one of the wooden stools and the two of you can pose together until I get the right angle to take the photo."

Runt: "Okay. Let's do the pose now, Rita."

Rita and Runt were now deciding on a pose while the artist was setting up the proper angle for the picture. The two of them settled on a pose where they were close together similar to the one used for the painting earlier.

Artist: "That looks perfect! Now hold still and..."

The artist pushed the button and the camera flashed a light. The two were stunned for a bit but the effect wore off after a few seconds. The artist then turned the device to scroll to the next available exposure.

Rita: "All right. Now you go pose with Runt, honey."

Artist: "No problem, Rita. I'll sit on the floor more or less where you two were. I'll let you know when we're ready..."

The artist sat on the floor as Runt laid on his lap with a smile on his face as they both looked towards Rita.

Rita: "Okay. What do I do now?"

Artist: "Just gently push the button on the top of the camera and try not to move it from its current spot."

Rita: "All right. Are you two ready?"

Runt: "We're ready. Definitely, definitely ready..."

Rita: "Here goes nothing..."

Rita gently pushed the button and the camera flashed a light a second time.

Rita: "I hope it came out all right..."

Artist: "We won't know until I get the film developed tomorrow. Now you get to pose with me, Rita."

The artist turned the device to scroll to the last available exposure. He then instructed Runt on which button to push and then he sat on the floor a second time. Rita joined him and they both settled on a pose for the picture.

Rita: "Okay, Runt. We're ready... Please don't mess it up..."

Runt: "I'll do my best, Rita!"

As Runt got ready to push the button, Rita decided to wrap her arms around the artist and lean her face next to his cheek. After Runt did his best to gently push the button, the camera flashed a third time. The camera was then making a strange sound.

Runt: "Uh oh... Did I break it?"

Artist: "No, it's not broken. It always makes that sound when the last exposure is used up. Now I have to take it to a store that'll develop the photos tomorrow before I go to work."

Rita: "Well... That was fun. I wonder how long we've been in here..."

The artist checked a nearby clock and noticed that it was already past 1:00 P.M.

Artist: "Whoa... I think we should call it a day for now. Let's go have lunch and then I'll set up one of the game consoles for the two of you to try out."

Rita: "Sure thing, honey. I am pretty hungry..."

Runt: "Me too!"

The artist went to the kitchen and took out a can of dog food for Runt and a can of cat food for Rita. After using a can opener to open them, he then poured part of each can into the proper bowl and afterwards used pieces of aluminum foil to cover the now opened cans to store them in the refrigerator to keep the contents fresh.

Rita: "Mmm... Something smells good..."

Runt: "Lunch time! Definitely, definitely lunch time!"

Artist: "You two enjoy yourselves while I make something for myself."

The artist took out a can of pasta and poured it into a bowl. Rita heard the can opener while she was eating and turned around in confusion.

Rita: "What's that? Spaghetti in a can?"

Artist: "Yeah, pretty much. You just open the can, pour it into a bowl and microwave it for a short time. It's something that pretty much makes a quick and easy meal for humans, especially when they have a busy schedule or just want something simple."

The artist heated the pasta in the microwave and then waited a minute or so before eating it. After the trio had finished having lunch, the artist went to the living room and started setting up a game console while Rita and Runt watched. After setting up the proper cables and hooking up the controllers, it was almost ready to use.

Rita: "Whoa... That was quick. I've seen kids play something like this when I would look inside the windows of some humans' homes. And you have several of them..."

Artist: "I've amassed a small assortment of consoles and games over the years. I decided to set up this one since it's one of my favorites and a good one for beginners. Most call it the NES."

Runt: "N-E-S? What's that mean?"

Artist: "It's short for 'Nintendo Entertainment System'. Now you know why most people call it the NES instead. And this game is called 'Super Mario Brothers', the first game I ever owned for the system."

Rita: "Huh? 'Super Mario Brothers'? So, is this a game for two players then?"

Artist: "That's right! Rita can use the 'Player 1' controller and Runt can use the 'Player 2' controller. The first player controls Mario and the second player controls his brother, Luigi. I'll play a little bit first so you can get an idea of how the game is played and I'll give you a few tips along the way."

Rita: "Sounds good. What do ya think, Runt?"

Runt: "I think I'm gonna like this N-E-S thing!"

The artist sits on the couch with Rita and Runt and selects the "1 Player" mode to show his friends the ropes. Will the two companions enjoy one of the artist's favorite pastimes?